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THE
FATAL CURIOSITT.

A
TRAGEDY.

BY MR. GEORGE LILLO.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,
As originally acted at the
THEATRE-ROYAL, HAY-MARKET.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,
By Permission of the Manager.

The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation,
and those printed in Italics are Additions of the Theatres.

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GEORGE LILLO.

THIS Gentleman was by profession a jeweller, and was born in the neighbourhood of Moorgate in London, on the 4th of Feb. 1693, in which neighbourhood he pursued his occupation for many years with the fairest and most unblemished character. He was bred up in the principles of the Protestant Dissenters ; but let his religious tenets have been what they would, he would have been an honour to any sect he had adhered to. He was strongly attached to the Muses, yet seemed to have laid it down as a maxim, that the devotion paid to them ought always to tend to the promotion of virtue, morality, and religion. In pursuance of this aim, Mr. Lillo was happy in the choice of his subjects, and shewed great power of affecting the heart, by working up the passions to such a height, as to render the distresses of common and domestic life as equally interesting to the audiences as that of kings and heroes, and the ruin brought on private families by an indulgence of avarice, lust, &c. as the havock made in states and empires by ambition, cruelty or tyranny.

His *George Barnwell*, *Fatal Curiosity*, and *Arden of Feversham*, are all planned on common and well-known stories ; yet they have perhaps more frequently drawn tears from an audience, than the more pompous tragedies of *Alexander the Great*, *All for Love*, &c. parti-

cularly the first of them, which, being founded on a well-known old ballad, many of the critics of that time, who went to the first representation of it, formed so contemptible an idea of the piece in their expectations, that they purchased the ballad, some thousands of which were used in one day on this account, in order to draw comparisons between that and the play. But the merit of the play soon got the better of this contempt, and presented them with scenes written so truly to the heart, that they were compelled to subscribe to their power, and drop their ballads to take up their handkerchiefs.

Mr. Lillo, as I before observed, has been happy in the choice of his subjects; his conduct in the management of them is no less meritorious, and his *Pathos* very great. If there is any fault to be objected to his writings, it is that sometimes he affects an elevation of style somewhat above the simplicity of his subject, and the supposed rank of his characters; but the custom of tragedy will stand in some degree of excuse for this, and a still better argument perhaps may be admitted in vindication, not only of our present author, but of other writers in the like predicament, which is, that even nature itself will justify this conduct, since we find even the most humble characters in real life, when under peculiar circumstances of distress, or actuated by the influence of any violent passions, will at times be elevated to an aptness of expression and power of

language, not only greatly superior to themselves, but even to the general language of conversation of persons of much higher rank in life, and of minds more perfectly cultivated.

In the Prologue to *Elmerick*, which was not acted until after the author's death, it is said, that when he wrote that play he *was depressed by want*, and afflicted by disease; but in the former particular there appears to be evidently a mistake, as he died possessed of an estate of 60*l. per annum*, besides other effects to a considerable value. The late editor of his works (Mr. Davies), in two volumes, 12mo. 1775, relates the following story of his author, which however we cannot think adapted to convey any favourable impression of the person of whom it is told: 'Towards the latter part of his life, Mr. Lillo, whether from judgement or humour, determined to put the sincerity of his friends, who professed a very high regard for him, to a trial. In order to carry on this design, he put in practice an odd kind of stratagem: he asked one of his intimate acquaintance to lend him a considerable sum of money, and for this he declared he would give no bond, nor any other security, except a note of hand; the person to whom he applied, not liking the terms, civilly refused him.

' Soon after, Lillo met his nephew, Mr. Underwood, with whom he had been at variance for some time.

• He put the same question to him, desiring him to
 • lend him money upon the same terms. His nephew,
 • either from a sagacious apprehension of his uncle's
 • real intention, or from generosity of spirit, immedi-
 • ately offered to comply with his request. Lillo was
 • so well pleased with this ready compliance of Mr.
 • Underwood, that he immediately declared that he
 • was fully satisfied with the love and regard that his
 • nephew bore him; he was convinced that his friend-
 • ship was entirely disinterested, and assured him that
 • he should reap the benefit such generous behaviour
 • deserved. In consequence of this promise, he be-
 • queathed him the bulk of his fortune.

The same writer says, that Lillo in his person was
 lusty, but not tall, and of a pleasing aspect, though
 unhappily deprived of the sight of one eye.

Our author died Sept. 3, 1739, in the 47th year of his
 age; and a few months after his death, Henry Fielding
 printed the following character of him in *The Champion*:
 • He had a perfect knowledge of human nature, though
 • his contempt of all base means of application, which
 • are the necessary steps to great acquaintance, restrain-
 • ed his conversation within very narrow bounds. He
 • had the spirit of an old Roman, joined to the inno-
 • cence of a primitive Christian; he was content with
 • his little state of life, in which his excellent temper
 • of mind gave him an happiness beyond the power of

‘riches, and it was necessary for his friends to have
‘a sharp insight into his want of their services, as
‘well as good inclination or abilities to serve him.
‘In short he was one of the best of men, and those
‘who knew him best will most regret his loss.’

Whincop (or the compiler of the list of plays affixed to his *Scanderbeg*) has indeed spoke but slightly of his genius, on account of some little sort of rivalry and pique subsisting between that gentleman and our author with respect to a tragedy of the latter's, entitled, *The Christian Hero*, written on the same story with the *Scanderbeg* of the former. Notwithstanding which, under the sanction not only of the success of his pieces, but also of the commendations bestowed on them by Mr. Pope, and other indisputable judges, I shall venture to affirm that Mr. Lillo is far from standing in the lowest rank of merit (however he may be ranged with respect to fame) among our dramatic writers.

His dramatic pieces are seven in number, and their titles as follow :

Sylvia; or The Country Burial. O. 8vo. 1730.

The London Merchant; or the History of George Barnwell. T. 8vo. 1731.

The Christian Hero. T. 8vo. N. D. [1734.]

The Fatal Curiosity. T. 8vo. 1737.

Marina, a Play, 8vo. 1738.

Britannia and Batavia. M. 8vo. 1740.

Elmerick; or Justice Triumphant. T. 8vo. 1740.

Arden of Feversham. F. 12mo. 1762.

In the proposals for publishing Lillo's works some years ago, besides the above, was contained one piece, called,

'The Regulators.'

THE
FATAL CURIOSITY.

THIS piece consists of but three acts. The story of it, however, is very simple and affecting, and is said to have been founded on a real fact which happened on the western coast of England. The circumstance, of a son long absent from his parents, keeping himself, on his return to visit them, for some time unknown, is natural and unforced, while at the same time their being induced by the depth of their distress and penury to resolve on and perpetrate his murder, for the sake of the treasures he had shewn them he was possessed of, is productive of some very fine scenes of intermingled horror and tenderness, when they come to be informed of the dreadful deed they have committed. In short, the play is in our opinion equal, if not superior, to any of this author's other works, and, when acted where it made its first appearance, met with a very favourable reception.

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY HENRY FIELDING, ESQ.

SPOKEN BY MR. ROBERTS.

*THE tragic muse has long forgot to please
With Shakspeare's nature, or with Fletcher's ease :
No passion mov'd, thro' five long acts you sit,
Charm'd with the poet's language, or his wit.
Fine things are said, no matter whence they fall ;
Each single character might speak them all.*

*But from this modern fashionable way,
To night, our author begs your leave to stray.
No fustian hero rages here to night ;
No armies fall to fix a tyrant's right :
From lower life we draw our scene's distress :
———Let not your equals move your pity less !
Virtue distrest in humble state support ;
Nor think, she never lives without the court.*

*Tho' to our scenes no royal robes belong,
And tho' our little stage as yet be young,
Throw both your scorn and prejudice aside,
Let us with favour, not contempt be try'd ;
Thro' the first acts a kind attention lend,
The growing scene shall force you to attend ;*

*Shall catch the eyes of every tender fair,
And make them charm their lovers with a tear.
The lover too by pity shall impart
His tender passion to his fair one's heart :
The breast which others anguish cannot move,
Was ne'er the seat of friendship, or of love.*

Dramatis Personæ.

HAY-MARKET.

Men.

Old WILMOT, - - - - -	Mr. Roberts.
Young WILMOT, - - - - -	Mr. Davis.
EUSTACE, - - - - -	Mr. Wocburn.
RANDAL, - - - - -	Mr. Blakes.

Women.

AGNES, Wife to old Wilmot, - - -	Mrs. Clarke.
CHARLOT, - - - - -	Miss Jones.
MARIA, - - - - -	Miss Karver.

Vistors, Men and Women.

SCENE, Penryn in Cornwall.



FATAL CURIOSITY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Room in Wilmot's House. Old WILMOT solus.

Old Wilmot.

THE day is far advanc'd; the chearful sun !
Pursues with vigour his repeated course ;
No labours less'ning, nor no time decaying
His strength, or splendor: evermore the same,
From age to age his influence sustains
Dependent worlds, bestows both life and motion
On the dull mass that forms their dusky orbs,
Cheers them with heat, and gilds them with his
brightness.

Yet man, of jarring elements compos'd,
Who posts from change to change, from the first hour
Of his frail being till his dissolution,
Enjoys the sad prerogative above him,
To think, and to be wretched—What is life,
To him that's born to die! or what that wisdom
Whose perfection ends, in knowing we know nothing!

B

Mere contradiction all ! A tragick farce,
Tedious tho' short, and without art elab'rate,
Ridiculously sad——

RANDAL enters.

Where hast been, Randal ?

Rand. Not out of Penryn, sir ; but to the strand,
To hear what news from Falmouth since the storm
Of wind last night.

O. Wilm. It was a dreadful one.

Rand. Some found it so. A noble ship from India
Ent'ring in the harbour, run upon a rock,
And there was lost.

O. Wilm. What came of those on board her ?

Rand. Some few are sav'd ; but much the greater part,
'Tis thought, are perished.

O. Wilm. They are past the fear
Of future tempests, or a wreck on shore ;
Those who escaped, are still expos'd to both.

Rand. But I've heard news, much stranger than this
shipwreck

Here in Cornwall. The brave Sir Walter Raleigh,
Being arrived at Plymouth from Guiana,
A most unhappy voyage, has been betray'd
By base Sir Lewis Stukeley, his own kinsman,
And seiz'd on by an order from the court ;
And 'tis reported, he must lose his head,
To satisfy the Spaniards.

O. Wilm. Not unlikely ;
His martial genius does not suit the times.

There's now no insolence that Spain can offer;
But to the shame of this pacifick reign,
Poor England must submit to—Gallant man!
Posterity perhaps may do thee justice,
And praise thy courage, learning and integrity,
When thou'rt past hearing: thy successful enemies,
Much sooner paid, have their reward in hand,
And know for what they labour'd.—Such events
Must, questionless, excite all thinking men,
To love and practise virtue!

Rand. Nay; 'tis certain,
That virtue ne'er appears so like itself,
So truly bright and great, as when oppress.

O. Wilm. I understand no riddles.—Where's your
mistress?

Rand. I saw her pass the High-street t'wards the
minster.

O. Wilm. She's gone to visit Charlot—She doth well.
In the soft bosom of that gentle maid,
There dwells more goodness, than the rigid race
Of moral pedants, e'er believ'd, or taught.
With what amazing constancy and truth,
Doth she sustain the absence of our son,
Whom more than life she loves! How shun for him,
Whom we shall ne'er see more, the rich and great;
Who own her charms more than supply the want
Of shining heaps, and sigh to make her happy.
Since our misfortunes, we have found no friend,
None who regarded our distress, but her;
And she, by what I have observ'd of late,

Is tired, or exhausted—curst condition !
 To live a burden to one only friend,
 And blast her youth with our contagious woe !
 Who that had reason, soul, or sense would bear it
 A moment longer !—Then this honest wretch !——
 I must dismiss him——Why should I detain
 A grateful, gen'rous youth to perish with me ?
 His service may procure him bread elsewhere,
 Tho' I have none to give him.—Pr'ythee, Randal !
 How long hast thou been with me ?

Rand. Fifteen years.

I was a very child when first you took me,
 To wait upon your son, my dear young master !
 I oft have wish'd, I'd gone to India with him ;
 Tho' you, desponding, give him o'er for lost.

[Old Wilmot wipes his eyes.]

I am to blame——This talk revives your sorrow
 For his absence.

O. Wilm. How can that be reviv'd,
 Which never died ?

Rand. The whole of my intent
 Was to confess your bounty, that supplied
 The loss of both my parents : I was long
 The object of your charitable care.

O. Wilm. No more of that : Thou'st served me
 longer since
 Without reward ; so that account is balanced,
 Or rather I'm thy debtor——I remember,
 When poverty began to show her face
 Within these walls, and all my other servants,

Like pamp'ring vermin from a falling house,
Retreated with the plunder they had gain'd,
And left me too indulgent and remiss
For such ungrateful wretches, to be crush'd
Beneath the ruin they had help'd to make,
That you, more good than wise, refus'd to leave me.

Rand. Nay, I beseech you, sir!—

O. Wilm. With my distress,
In perfect contradiction to the world,
Thy love, respect and diligence increased;
Now all the recompence within my power,
Is to discharge thee, Randal, from my hard,
Unprofitable service.

Rand. Heaven! forbid.

Shall I forsake you in your worst necessity?—
Believe me, sir! my honest soul abhors
The barb'rous thought.

O. Wilm. What! canst thou feed on air?
I have not left wherewith to purchase food
For one meal more.

Rand. Rather than leave you thus,
I'll beg my bread, and live on others bounty
While I serve you.

O. Wilm. Down, down my swelling heart,
Or burst in silence: 'tis thy cruel fate
Insults thee by his kindness—He is innocent
Of all the pain it gives thee—Go thy ways
I will no more suppress thy youthful hopes
Of rising in the world.

Rand. 'Tis true; I'm young,

Bij

And never tried my fortune, or my genius;
Which may perhaps find out some happy means,
As yet unthought of, to supply your wants.

O. Wilm. Thou tortur'st me—I hate all obligations
Which I can ne'er return—And who art thou,
That I shou'd stoop to take 'em from thy hand?
Care for thy self, but take no thought for me;
I will not want thee—trouble me no more.

Rand. Be not offended, sir! and I will go.
I ne'er repin'd at your commands before;
But, heaven's my witness! I obey you now
With strong reluctance, and a heavy heart.
Farewell, my worthy master!

[*Going.*]

O. Wilm. Farewell—Stay—
As thou art yet a stranger to the world,
Of which alas! I've had too much experience,
I shou'd, methinks, before we part, bestow
A little counsel on thee—Dry thy eyes—
If thou weep'st thus, I shall proceed no farther.
Dost thou aspire to greatness, or to wealth,
Quit books and the unprofitable search
Of wisdom there, and study human kind:
No science will avail thee without that;
But that obtain'd, thou need'st not any other.
This will instruct thee to conceal thy views,
And wear the face of probity and honour,
'Till thou hast gain'd thy end; which must be ever
Thy own advantage, at that man's expence
Who shall be weak enough to think thee honest.

Rand. You mock me, sure.

O. Wilm. I never was more serious.

Rand. Why should you counsel what you scorn'd to practise?

O. Wilm. Because that foolish scorn has been my ruin.

I've been an idiot, but would have thee wiser,
And treat mankind, as they would treat thee, Randal;
As they deserve, and I've been treated by 'em.
Thou'st seen by me, and those who now despise me,
How men of fortune fall, and beggars rise;
Shun my example; treasure up my precepts;
The world's before thee—be a knave, and prosper.
What, art thou dumb? [After a long pause.]

Rand. Amazement ties my tongue.

Where are your former principles?

O. Wilmot. No matter;

Suppose I have renounc'd 'em: I have passions,
And love thee still; therefore would have thee think,
The world is all a scene of deep deceit,
And he who deals with mankind on the square,
Is his own bubble, and undoes himself. [Exit.]

Rand. Is this the man, I thought so wise and just?
What teach, and counsel me to be a villain!
Sure grief has made him frantick, or some fiend
Assum'd his shape—I shall suspect my senses.
High-minded he was ever, and improvident;
But pitiful and generous to a fault:
Pleasure he loved, but honour was his idol.
O fatal change! O horrid transformation!
So a majestick temple, sunk to ruin,

Becomes the loathsome shelter and abode
Of lurking serpents, toads, and beasts of prey;
And scaly dragons hiss, and lions roar,
Where wisdom taught, and musick charm'd before.

SCENE II.

A Parlour in Charlot's House. CHARLOT and MARIA enter.

Char. What terror and amazement must they feel
Who die by ship-wreck!

Mar. 'Tis a dreadful thought!

Char. Ay; is it not, Maria! to descend,
Living and conscious, to that wat'ry tomb?
Alas! had we no sorrows of our own,
The frequent instances of others' woe,
Must give a gen'rous mind a world of pain.
But you forget you promised me to sing.
Though cheerfulness and I have long been strangers,
Harmonious sounds are still delightful to me.
There is in melody a secret charm
That flatters, while it adds to my disquiet,
And makes the deepest sadness the most pleasing.
There's sure no passion in the human soul,
But finds its food in musick—I wou'd hear
The song compos'd by that unhappy maid,
Whose faithful lover 'scaped a thousand perils
From rocks and sands, and the devouring deep;
And after all, being arrived at home,
Passing a narrow brook, was drowned there,
And perished in her sight.

Mar. Cease, cease, heart-easing tears;
Adieu, you flatt'ring fears,
Which seven long tedious years
Taught me to bear.

Tears are for lighter woes;
Fear no such danger knows,
As fate remorseless shows,
Endless despair.

Dear cause of all my pain,
On the wide stormy main,
Thou wast preserv'd in vain,
Though still ador'd;

Hadst thou died there unseen,
My blasted eyes had been
Sav'd from the horrid'st scene
Maid e'er deplor'd.

[Charlot finds a letter.

Char. What's this?—A letter superscribed to me!
None could convey it here but you, Maria:
Ungen'rous, cruel maid! to use me thus!
To join with flatt'ring men to break my peace,
And persecute me to the last retreat!

Mar. Why should it break your peace, to hear the
sighs

Of honourable love, and know th' effects
Of your resistless charm? This letter is——

Char. No matter whence—return it back unopen'd:
I have no love, no charms but for my Wilmot,
Nor would have any.

Mar. Strange infatuation !

Why should you waste the flower of your days
In fruitless expectation——Wilmot's dead ;
Or living, dead to you.

Char. I'll not despair ;

Patience shall cherish hope, nor wrong his honour
By unjust suspicion. I know his truth,
And will preserve my own. But to prevent
All future, vain, officious importunity,
Know, thou incessant foe of my repose,
Whether he sleeps secure from mortal cares,
In the deep bosom of the boist'rous main,
Or tost with tempests, still endures its rage ;
Whether his weary pilgrimage by land
Has found an end, and he now rests in peace
In earth's cold womb, or wanders o'er her face ;
Be it my lot to waste, in pining grief,
The remnant of my days for his known loss,
Or live, as now, uncertain and in doubt,
No second choice shall violate my vows :
High heaven, which heard them, and abhors the per-
jured,

Can witness, they were made without reserve ;
Never to be retracted, ne'er dissolved
By accidents or absence, time or death.

Mar. I know, and long have known, my honest
zeal

To serve you gives offence——But be offended——
This is no time for flattery——Did your vows
Oblige you to support his gloomy, proud,

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Impatient parents, to your utter ruin—
You well may weep to think on what you've done.

Char. I weep to think that I can do no more
For their support—What will become of 'em!—
The hoary, helpless, miserable pair!

Mar. Then all these tears, this sorrow is for them.

Char. Taught by afflictions, I have learn'd to bear
Much greater ills than poverty with patience.
When luxury and ostentation's banish'd,
The calls of nature are but few; and those
These hands, not us'd to labour, may supply.
But when I think on what my friends must suffer,
My spirits fail, and I'm o'erwhelm'd with grief.

Mar. What I wou'd blame, you force me to admire,

And mourn for you, as you lament for them.
Your patience, constancy, and resignation
Merit a better fate.

Char. So pride would tell me,
And vain self-love, but I believe them not:
And if by wanting pleasure I have gain'd
Humility, I'm richer for my loss.

Mar. You have the heavenly art, still to improve
Your mind by all events—But here comes one,
Whose pride seems to increase with her misfortunes.

AGNES enters.

Her faded dress unfashionably fine,
As ill conceals her poverty, as that
Strain'd complaisance her haughty, swelling heart.

Though perishing with want, so far from asking,
 She ne'er receives a favour uncompell'd,
 And while she ruins, scorns to be oblig'd:
 She wants me gone, and I abhor her sight. [Ex. Mar.

Char. This visit's kind.

Agn. Few else would think it so:

Those who would once have thought themselves much
 honour'd

By the least favour, though 'twere but a look,
 I could have shewn them, now refuse to see me.

'Tis misery enough to be reduced
 To the low level of the common herd,
 Who, born to begg'ry, envy all above them;
 But 'tis the curse of curses, to endure
 The insolent contempt of those we scorn.

Char. By scorning, we provoke them to contempt;
 And thus offend, and suffer in our turns:
 We must have patience.

Agn. No, I scorn them yet.
 But there's no end of suff'ring, who can say
 Their sorrows are compleat? My wretched husband,
 Tired with our woes, and hopeless of relief,
 Grows sick of life.

Char. May gracious heaven support him!

Agn. And, urged by indignation and despair,
 Would plunge into eternity at once,
 By foul self-murder: his fixed love for me,
 Whom he would fain persuade to share his fate,
 And take the same, uncertain, dreadful course,
 Alone withholds his hand.

Char. And may it ever!

Agn. I've known with him the two extremes of life,
The highest happiness, and deepest woe,
With all the sharp and bitter aggravations
Of such a vast transition—Such a fall
In the decline of life!—I have as quick,
As exquisite a sense of pain as he,
And wou'd do any thing, but die, to end it;
But there my courage fails—Death is the worst
That fate can bring, and cuts off ev'ry hope.

Char. We must not chuse, but strive to bear our lot
Without reproach, or guilt: but by one act
Of desperation, we may overthrow
The merit we've been raising all our days;
And lose our whole reward—And now, methinks,
Now more than ever, we have cause to fear,
And be upon our guard. The hand of heaven
Spreads clouds on clouds o'er our benighted heads,
And wrapt in darkness, doubles our distress.
I had, the night last past, repeated twice,
A strange and awful dream: I would not yield
To fearful superstition, nor despise
The admonition of a friendly power
That wish'd my good.

Agn. I've certain plagues enough,
Without the help of dreams, to make me wretched.

Char. I wou'd not stake my happiness, or duty
On their uncertain credit, nor on aught
But reason, and the known decrees of heaven.
Yet dreams have sometimes shewn events to come,

And may excite to vigilance and care,
 In some important hour; when all our weakness
 Shall be attacked, and all our strength be needful,
 To shun the gulph that gapes for our destruction,
 And fly from guilt, and everlasting ruin.
 My vision may be such, and sent to warn us,
 Now we are tried by multiplied afflictions,
 To mark each motion of our swelling hearts,
 And not attempt to extricate ourselves,
 And seek deliverance by forbidden ways;
 But keep our hopes and innocence entire,
 'Till we're dismiss'd to join the happy dead
 In that bless'd world, where transitory pain
 And frail imperfect virtue, is rewarded
 With endless pleasure, and consummate joy;
 Or heaven relieves us here.

Agn. Well, pray proceed;
 You've rais'd my curiosity at least.

Char. Methought, I sat, in a dark winter's night,
 My garments thin, my head and bosom bare,
 On the wide summit of a barren mountain;
 Defenceless and expos'd, in that high region,
 To all the cruel rigours of the season.
 The sharp bleak winds pierc'd through my shivering
 frames,
 And storms of hail, and sleet, and driving rains
 Beat with impetuous fury on my head,
 Drench'd my chill'd limbs, and pour'd a deluge round
 me.
 On one hand, ever gentle patience sate,

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On whose calm bosom I reclin'd my head ;
And on the other, silent contemplation.
At length, to my unclos'd and watchful eyes,
That long had roll'd in darkness, and oft rais'd
Their cheerless orbs towards the starless sky,
And sought for light in vain, the dawn appeared ;
And I beheld a man, an utter stranger,
But of a graceful and exalted mien,
Who press'd with eager transport to embrace me.
—I shunn'd his arms—But at some words he spoke,
Which I have now forgot, I turn'd again,
But he was gone—And oh! transporting sight !
Your son, my dearest Wilmot ! fill'd his place.

Agn. If I regarded dreams, I should expect
Some fair event from yours: I have heard nothing
That should alarm you yet.

Char. But what's to come,
Though more obscure, is terrible indeed.
Methought we parted soon, and when I sought him,
You and his father—Yes, you both were there—
Strove to conceal him from me: I pursued
You with my cries, and call'd on heaven and earth
To judge my wrongs, and force you to reveal
Where you had hid my love, my life, my Wilmot!—

Agn. Unless you mean t' affront me, spare the rest.
'Tis just as likely Wilmot should return,
As we become your foes.

Char. Far be such rudeness
From Charlot's thoughts: but when I heard your name

Self-murder, it reviv'd the frightful image of such a
'dreadful scene.

Agn. You will persist!——

Char. Excuse me; I have done. Being a dream,
I thought, indeed, it cou'd not give offence.

Agn. Not when the matter of it is offensive!——
You cou'd not think so, had you thought at all;
But I take nothing ill from thee——Adieu;
I've tarried longer than I first intended,
And my poor husband mourns the while alone.
[Exit Agnes.]

Char. She's gone abruptly, and I fear displeas'd.
The least appearance of advice or caution,
Sets her impatient temper in a flame.
When grief, that well might humble, swells our pride,
And pride increasing, aggravates our grief,
The tempest must prevail 'till we are lost.

When heaven, incens'd, proclaims unequal war
With guilty earth, and sends its shafts from far,
No bolt descends to strike, no flame to burn
The hum'le shrubs that in low valleys mourn;
While mountain pines, whose lofty heads aspire
To fan the storm, and wave in fields of fire,
And stubborn oaks that yield not to its force,
Are burnt, o'erthrown, or shiver'd in its course.

SCENE III.

*The Town and Port of Penryn. Young WILMOT and
EUSTACE enter, in Indian habits.*

Y. Wilm. Welcome, my friend! to Penryn: Her
we're safe.

Eust. Then we're deliver'd twice ; first from the sea,
And then from savage men, who, more remorseless,
Prey on shipwreck'd wretches, and spoil and murder
those

Whom fatal tempests and devouring waves,
In all their fury spar'd.

Y. Wilm. It is a scandal,
Though malice must acquit the better sort,
The rude unpolish'd people here in Cornwall
Have long laid under, and with too much justice :
Cou'd our superiors find some happy means
To mend it, they would gain immortal honour.
For 'tis an evil grown almost inv'terate,
And asks a bold and skilful hand to cure.

Eust. Your treasure's safe, I hope.

Y. Wilm. 'Tis here, thank heaven !
Being in jewels, when I saw our danger,
I hid it in my bosom.

Eust. I observed you ;
And wonder how you could command your thoughts,
In such a time of terror and confusion.

Y. Wilm. My thoughts were then at home—O Eng-
land ! England !

Thou seat of plenty, liberty and health,
With transport I behold thy verdant fields,
Thy lofty mountains rich with useful ore,
Thy numerous herds, thy flocks, and winding streams :
After a long and tedious absence, Eustace !
With what delight we breath our native air,
And tread the genial soil that bore us first.

'Tis said, the world is ev'ry wise man's country ;
Yet, after having view'd its various nations,
I'm weak enough still to prefer my own
To all I've seen beside—You smile, my friend!
And think, perhaps, 'tis instinct more than reason:
Why be it so. Instinct preceded reason
In the wisest of us all, and may sometimes
Be much the better guide. But be it either;
I must confess, that even death itself
Appeared to me with twice its native horrors,
When apprehended in a foreign land,
Death is, no doubt, in ev'ry place the same:
Yet observation must convince us, most men,
Who have it in their power, chuse to expire
Where they first drew their breath.

Eust. Believe me, Wilmot!

Your grave reflections were not what I smil'd at ;
I own their truth. That we're return'd to England
Affords me all the pleasure you can feel
Merely on that account : yet I must think
A warmer passion gives you all this transport.
You have not wander'd, anxious, and impatient,
From clime to clime, and compass'd sea and land
To purchase wealth, only to spend your days
In idle pomp, and luxury at home :
I know thee better ; thou art brave and wise,
And must have nobler aims.

Y. Wilm. O Eustace! Eustace!

Thou knowest, for I've confest to thee, I love;
But having never seen the charming maid,

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Thou canst not know the fierceness of my flame.
 My hopes and fears, like the tempestuous seas
 That we have past, now mount me to the skies,
 Now hurl me down from that stupendous height,
 And drive me to the centre. Did you know
 How much depends on this important hour,
 You wou'd not be surpriz'd to see me thus.
 The sinking fortune of our ancient house,
 Which time and various accidents had wasted,
 Compell'd me young to leave my native country,
 My weeping parents, and my lovely Charlot;
 Who rul'd, and must for ever rule my fate.
 How I've improved, by care and honest commerce,
 My little stock, you are in part a witness.
 'Tis now seven tedious years, since I set forth;
 And as th' uncertain course of my affairs
 Bore me from place to place, I quickly lost
 The means of corresponding with my friends.
 —O! shou'd my Charlot! doubtful of my truth,
 Or in despair ever to see me more,
 Have given herself to some more happy lover!—
 Distraction's in the thought!—Or shou'd my parents,
 Grieved for my absence and oppress'd with want,
 Have sunk beneath their burden, and expired,
 While I too late was flying to relieve them;
 The end of all my long and weary travels,
 The hope, that made success itself a blessing,
 Being defeated, and for ever lost;
 What were the riches of the world to me?

Exit. The wretch who fears all that is possible,

Must suffer more than he who feels the worst
 A man can feel, who lives exempt from fear.
 A woman may be false, and friends are mortal;
 And yet your aged parents may be living,
 And your fair mistress constant.

Y. Wilm. True, they may;
 I doubt, but I despair not—No, my friend!
 My hopes are strong, and lively as my fears,
 And give me such a prospect of my happiness,
 As nothing but fruition can exceed:
 They tell me, Charlot is as true as fair,
 As good as wise, as passionate as chaste;
 That she, with fierce impatience, like my own,
 Laments our long and painful separation;
 That we shall meet, never to part again;
 That I shall see my parents, kiss the tears
 From their pale hollow cheeks, cheer their sad hearts,
 And drive that gaping phantom, meagre want,
 For ever from their board; crown all their days
 To come with peace, with pleasure, and abundance;
 Receive their fond embraces, and their blessings,
 And be a blessing to them.

Eust. 'Tis our weakness:—
 Blind to events, we reason in the dark,
 And fondly apprehend what none e'er found,
 Or ever shall, pleasure and pain unmix'd;
 And flatter, and torment ourselves, by turns,
 With what shall never be.

Y. Wilm. I'll go this instant
 To seek my Charlot, and explore my fate.

Eust. What, in that foreign habit!

Y. Wilm. That's a trifle,

Not worth my thoughts.

Eust. The hardships you've endured,
And your long stay beneath the burning zone,
Where one eternal sultry summer reigns,
Have marr'd the native hue of your complexion:
Methinks you look more like a sun-burnt Indian,
Than a Briton.

Y. Wilm. Well, 'tis no matter, Eustace!
I hope my mind's not alter'd for the worse;
And for my outside—But inform me, friend!
When I may hope to see you.

Eust. When you please:
You'll find me at the inn.

Y. Wilm. When I have learnt my doom, expect me
there.

'Till then, farewell!

Eust. Farewell! Success attend you! [*Ex. Eustace.*]

Y. Wilm. 'We flatter, and torment ourselves, by
turns,

'With what shall never be.' Amazing folly!
We stand exposed to many unavoidable
Calamities, and therefore fondly labour
T' increase their number, and inforce their weight,
By our fantastick hopes and groundless fears.

For one severe distress impos'd by fate,
What numbers doth tormenting fear create?

Deceiv'd by hope, Ixion like, we prove
Immortal joys, and seem to rival Jove;
The cloud dissolv'd, impatient we complain,
And pay for fancied bliss substantial pain.

ACT II. SCENE I.

*Charlot's House. CHARLOT enters, thoughtful; and soon
after MARIA from the other side.*

Maria,

MADAM, a stranger in a foreign habit
Desires to see you.

Char. In a foreign habit——

'Tis strange, and unexpected—But admit him.

[Exit Maria.]

Who can this stranger be? I know no foreigner.

Young WILMOT enters.

—Nor any man like this.

Y. Wilm. Ten thousand joys!——

[Going to embrace her.]

Char. Your are rude, sir—Pray forbear, and let me
know

What bus'ness brought you here; or leave the place.

Y. Wilm. She knows me not, or will not seem to
know me.

[Aside.]

Perfidious maid! Am I forgot or scorn'd?

Char. Strange questions from a man I never knew!

Y. Wilm. With what aversion, and contempt she
views me!

My fears are true; some other has her heart:

—She's lost—My fatal absence has undone me.

[*Aside.*

—O! cou'd thy Wilmot have forgot thee, Charlot!

Char. Ha! Wilmot! say! what do your words
import?

O gentle stranger! ease my swelling heart

That else will burst! Canst thou inform me ought?—

What dost thou know of Wilmot?

Y. Wilm. This I know.

When all the winds of heaven seem'd to conspire

Against the stormy main, and dreadful peals

Of rattling thunder deafen'd ev'ry ear,

And drown'd the affrighten'd mariners loud cries;

While livid lightning spread its sulphurous flames

Through all the dark horizon, and disclos'd

The raging seas incens'd to his destruction;

When the good ship in which he was embark'd,

Unable longer to support the tempest,

Broke, and o'erwhelm'd by the impetuous surge,

Sunk to the oozy bottom of the deep,

And left him struggling with the warring waves;

In that dread moment, in the jaws of death,

When his strength fail'd, and ev'ry hope forsook him,

And his last breath press'd t'wards his trembling lips,

The neighbouring rocks, that eccho'd to his moan,

Return'd no sound articulate, but Charlot.

Char. The fatal tempest, whose description strikes

The hearer with astonishment, is ceased;
 And Wilmot is at rest. The fiercer storm
 Of swelling passions that o'erwhelms the soul,
 And rages worse than the mad foaming seas
 In which he perish'd, ne'er shall vex him more.

Y. Wilm. Thou seem'st to think he's dead; enjoy
 that thought;

Persuade yourself that what you wish is true,
 And triumph in your falsehood—Yes, he's dead;
 You were his fate. The cruel winds and waves,
 That cast him pale and breathless on the shore,
 Spar'd him for greater woes—To know his Charlot,
 Forgetting all her vows to him and heaven,
 Had cast him from her thoughts—Then, then he died;
 But never must have rest. Ev'n now he wanders,
 A sad, repining, discontented ghost,
 The unsubstantial shadow of himself,
 And pours his plaintive groans in thy deaf ears,
 And stalks, unseen, before thee.

Char. 'Tis enough——

Detested falsehood now has done its worst.

And art thou dead?——And wou'd'st thou die, my
 Wilmot!

For one thou thought'st unjust?—Thou soul of truth!
 What must be done?—Which way shall I express
 Unutterable woe? Or how convince
 Thy dear departed spirit of the love,
 Th' eternal love, and never-failing faith
 Of thy much injur'd, lost, despairing Charlot?

Y. Wilm. Be still my flutt'ring heart; hope not too soon :

Perhaps I dream, and this is all illusion.

Char. If as some teach, the mind intuitive,
Free from the narrow bounds and slavish ties
Of sordid earth, that circumscribe its power
While it remains below, roving at large,
Can trace us to our most conceal'd retreat,
See all we act, and read our very thoughts;
To thee, O Wilmot! kneeling I appeal,
If e'er I swerv'd in action, word, or thought
From the severest constancy and truth,
Or ever wish to taste a joy on earth
That center'd not in thee, since last we parted,
May we ne'er meet again, but thy loud wrongs
So close the ear of mercy to my cries,
That I may never see those bright abodes
Where truth and virtue only have admission,
And thou inhabit'st now.

Y. Wilm. Assist me, Heaven !

Preserve my reason, memory, and sense !
O moderate my fierce tumultuous joys,
Or their excess will drive me to distraction.
O Charlot! Charlot! lovely, virtuous maid!
Can thy firm mind, in spite of time and absence,
Remain unshaken, and support its truth ;
And yet thy frailer memory retain
No image, no idea of thy lover?
Why dost thou gaze so wildly? Look on me :
Turn thy dear eyes this way ; observe me well.

Have scorching climates, time, and this strange habit
 So chang'd, and so disguis'd thy faithful Wilmot,
 That nothing in my voice, my face, or mien,
 Remains to tell my Chariot I am he?

*[After viewing him some time, she approaches weeping
 and gives him her hand; and then turning towards
 him, sinks upon his bosom.]*

Why dost thou weep? Why dost thou tremble thus?
 Why doth thy panting heart and cautious touch
 Speak thee but half convinc'd? Whence are thy fears?
 Why art thou silent? Canst thou doubt me still?

Char. No, Wilmot! no; I'm blind with too much
 light:

O'ercome with wonder, and oppress with joy;
 The struggling passions barr'd the doors of speech;
 But speech enlarg'd, affords me no relief.
 This vast profusion of extreme delight,
 Rising at once, and bursting from despair,
 Defies the aid of words, and mocks description:
 But for one sorrow, one sad scene of anguish,
 That checks the swelling torrent of my joys,
 I could not bear the transport.

F. Wilm. Let me know it:

Give me my portion of thy sorrow, Charlot!
 Let me partake thy grief, or bear it for thee.

Char. Alas! my Wilmot! these sad tears are thine;
 They flow for thy misfortunes. I am pierced
 With all the agonies of strong compassion,
 With all the bitter anguish you must feel,
 When you shall hear your parents:—

T. Wilm. Are no more.

Char. You apprehend me wrong.

T. Wilm. Perhaps I do.

Perhaps you mean to say, the greedy grave

Was satisfied with one, and one is left

To bless my longing eyes— But which, my Charlot!

—And yet forbear to speak, 'till I have thought—

Char. Nay, hear me, Wilnot!

T. Wilm. I perforce must hear thee.

For I might think 'till death, and not determine,

Of two so dear which I could bear to lose.

Char. Afflict yourself no more with groundless
fears:

Your parents both are living. Their distress,

The poverty to which they are reduced,

In spite of my weak aid, was what I mourned;

And that in helpless age, to them whose youth

Was crown'd with full prosperity, I fear,

Is worse, much worse than death.

T. Wilm. My joy's compleat!

My parents living, and possess'd of thee!—

From this blest hour, the happiest of my life,

I'll date my rest. My anxious hopes and fears

My weary travels, and my dangers past,

Are now rewarded all: now I rejoice

In my success, and count my riches gain.

For know, my soul's best treasure! I have wealth

Enough to glut ev'n avarice itself:

No more shall cruel want, or proud contempt,

Oppress the sinking spirits, or insult
The hoary heads of those who gave me being.

Char. 'Tis now, O riches, I conceive your worth;
You are not base, nor can you be superfluous,
But when misplac'd in base and sordid hands.
Fly, fly, my Wilmot! leave thy happy Charlot!
Thy filial piety, the sighs and tears
Of thy lamenting parents call thee hence.

Y. Wilm. I have a friend, the partner of my voyage,
Who, in the storm last night, was shipwreck'd with me.

Char. Shipwreck'd last night!—O you immortal
powers!

What have you suffer'd! How was you preserv'd?

Y. Wilm. Let that, and all my other strange escapes
And perilous adventures, be the theme
Of many a happy winter night to come.
My present purpose was t' intreat my angel,
To know this friend, this other better Wilmot;
And come with him this evening to my father's:
I'll send him to thee.

Char. I consent with pleasure.

Y. Wilm. Heavens! what a night!—How shall I bear
my joy!

My parents, yours, my friends, all will be mine,
And mine, like water, air, or the free splendid sun,
The undivided portion of you all.
If such the early hopes, the vernal bloom,
The distant prospect of my future bliss,
Then what ruddy autumn!—What the fruit!—
The full possession of thy heavenly charms!

The tedious, dark, and stormy winter o'er;
The hind, that all its pinching hardships bore,
With transport sees the weeks appointed bring
The cheerful, promis'd, gay, delightful spring;
The painted meadows, the harmonious woods,
The gentle Zephyrs, and unbridled floods,
With all their charms, his ravish'd thoughts employ,
But the rich harvest must compleat his joy.

SCENE II.

A Street in Penryn. RANDAL enters.

Rand. Poor! poor! and friendless! whither shall I
wander,

And to what point direct my views and hopes?—
A menial servant!—No—What, shall I live,
Here in this land of freedom, live distinguished,
And mark'd the willing slave of some proud subject,
And swell his useless train for broken fragments;
The cold remains of his superfluous board?—
I wou'd aspire to something more and better—
Turn thy eyes then to the prolific ocean,
Whose spacious bosom opens to thy view:
There deathless honour, and unenvied wealth
Have often crowned the brave adventurer's toils.
This is the native, uncontested right,
The fair inheritance of ev'ry Briton
That dares put in his claim—My choice is made:
A long farewell to Cornwall, and to England;

If I return—But stay, what stranger's this,
Who, as he views me, seems to mend his pace?

Young WILMOT enters.

Y. Wilm. Randal!—The dear companion of my
youth!—

Sure lavish fortune means to give me all
I could desire, or ask for this bless'd day,
And leave me nothing to expect hereafter.

Rand. Your pardon, sir! I know but one on earth
Could properly salute me by the title
You're pleased to give me, and I would not think
That you are he—That you are Wilmot.—

Y. Wilm. Why?

Rand. Because I could not bear the disappointment
Should I be deceived.

Y. Wilm. I am pleased to hear it:
Thy friendly fears better express thy thoughts
Than words could do.

Rand. O! Wilmot! O! my master!
Are you returned?

Y. Wilm. I have not embrac'd
My parents—I shall see you at my father's.

Rand. No; I'm discharged from thence—O sir! such
ruin—

Y. Wilm. I've heard it all, and hasten to relieve 'em;
Sure heaven hath bless'd me to that very end:
I've wealth enough; nor shalt thou want a part.

Rand. I have a part already—I am bless'd
In your success, and share in all your joys,

Y. Wilm. I doubt it not——But tell me, dost thou think,

My parents, not suspecting my return,
That I may visit them, and not be known?

Rand. 'Tis hard for me to judge. You are already
Grown so familiar to me, that I wonder
I knew you not at first: Yet it may be;
For you're much alter'd, and they think you dead.

Y. Wilm. This is certain; Charlot beheld me long,
And heard my loud reproaches, and complaints
Without rememb'ring she had ever seen me.
My mind at ease grows wanton: I would fain
Refine on happiness. Why may I not
Indulge my curiosity, and try
If it be possible by seeing first
My parents as a stranger, to improve
Their pleasure by surprize?

Rand. It may indeed
Inhance your own, to see from what despair
Your timely coming, and unhoped success
Have given you power to raise them.

Y. Wilm. I remember,
E'er since we learned together, you excelled
In writing fairly, and could imitate
Whatever hand you saw with great exactness.
Of this I'm not so absolute a master.
I therefore beg you'll write, in *Charlot's* name
And character, a letter to my father;
And recommend me, as a friend of hers,
To his acquaintance.

Rand. Sir, if you desire it—
And yet—

Y. Wilm. Nay, no objections—'Twill save time,
Most precious with me now. For the deception,
If doing what my Charlot will approve,
'Cause done for me and with a good intent,
Deserves the name, I'll answer it myself.
If this succeeds, I purpose to defer
Discov'ring who I am 'till Charlot comes,
And thou, and all who love me. Ev'ry friend
Who witness my happiness to-night,
Will, by partaking, multiply my joys.

Rand. You grow luxurious in your mental pleasures:
Could I deny you aught, I would not write
This letter. To say true, I ever thought
Your boundless curiosity a weakness.

Y. Wilm. What canst thou blame in this?

Rand. Your pardon, sir!
I only speak in general: I'm ready
T' obey your orders.

Y. Wilm. I am much thy debtor;
But I shall find a time to quit thy kindness.
O Randal! but imagine to thyself
The floods of transport, the sincere delight
That all my friends will feel, when I disclose
To my astonish'd parents my return;
And then confess, that I have well contriv'd
By giving others joy to exalt my own.

As pain and anguish, in a gen'rous mind,
While kept conceal'd, and to ourselves confin'd,

Want half their force ; so pleasure when it flows
In torrents round us more extatick grows. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

A Room in Old Wilmot's House. Old WILMOT and AGNES.

O. Wilm. Here, take this Seneca, this haughty
pedant,

Who governing the master of mankind,
And awing power imperial, prates of—patience ;
And praises poverty—possess'd of millions :
—Sell him, and buy us bread. The scantiest meal
The vilest copy of his book e'er purchas'd,
Will give us more relief in this distress,
Than all his boasted precepts.—Nay, no tears ;
Keep them to move compassion when you beg.

Agn. My heart may break, but never stoop to that.

O. Wilm. Nor would I live to see it—But dispatch
[*Exit Agnes.*]

Where must I charge this length of misery,
That gathers force each moment as it rolls,
And must at last o'erwhelm me ; but on hope,
Vain, flattering, delusive, groundless hope ;
A senseless expectation of relief
That has for years deceiv'd ?—Had I thought
As I do know, as wise men ever think,
When first this hell of poverty o'ertook me,
That power to die implies a right to do it.

And should be us'd when life becomes a pain,
 What plagues had I prevented?—True, my wife
 Is still a slave to prejudice and fear—
 I would not leave my better part, the dear [Weeps.
 Faithful companion of my happier days,
 To bear the weight of age and want alone.
 ——I'll try once more——

AGNES enters, and after her Young WILMOT.

O. Wilm. Return'd, my life! so soon!

Agn. The unexpected coming of this stranger
 Prevents my going yet.

Y. Wilm. You're, I presume,
 The gentleman to whom this is directed. [Gives a
 What wild neglect, the token of despair; letter.
 What indigence, what misery appears
 In each disorder'd, or disfurnish'd room
 Of this once gorgeous house? What discontent,
 What anguish and confusion fill the faces
 Of its dejected owners?

O. Wilm. Sir, such welcome
 As this poor house affords, you may command.
 Our ever friendly neighbour—Once we hoped
 To have called fair Charlot by a dearer name—
 But we have done with hope—I pray excuse
 This incoherence—We had once a son. [Weeps.

Agn. That you are come from that dear virtuous
 maid,
 Revives in us the mem'ry of a loss,
 Which, tho' long since, we have not learned to bear.

Y. Wilm. The joy to see them, and the bitter pain
It is to see them thus, touches my soul
With tenderness and grief, that will o'erflow.
My bosom heaves and swells, as it would burst ;
My bowels move, and my heart melts within me.

—— They know me not, and yet, I fear, I shall
Defeat my purpose, and betray myself. [*Aside.*]

O. Wilm. The lady calls you here her valued friend ;
Enough, though nothing more should be implied,
To recommend you to our best esteem,

—— A worthless acquisition — May she find
Some means that better may express her kindness ;
But she, perhaps, hath purposed to enrich
You with herself, and end her fruitless sorrow
For one whom death alone can justify
For leaving her so long. If it be so,
May you repair his loss, and be to Charlot
A second, happier Wilmot. Partial nature,
Who only favours youth, as feeble age
Were not her offspring, or below her care,
Has seal'd our doom : no second hope shall spring
From my dead loins, and Agnes' sterile womb,
To dry our tears, and dissipate despair.

Agnes. The last most abandon'd of our kind,
By heaven and earth neglected or despised,
The loathsome grave, that robb'd us of our son
And all our joys in him, must be our refuge.

Y. Wilm. Let ghosts unpardon'd, or devoted fiends,
Fear without hope, and wail in such sad strains ;
But grace defend the living from despair.

The darkest hours precede the rising sun ;
And mercy may appear, when least expected.

O. Wilm. This I have heard a thousand times repeated,

And have, believing, been as oft deceived.

Y. Wilm. Behold in me an instance of its truth.

At sea twice shipwreck'd, and as oft the prey
Of lawless pirates ; by the Arabs thrice
Surpriz'd, and robb'd on shore ; and once reduc'd
To worse than these, the sum of all distress
That the most wretched feel on this side hell,
Ev'n slavery itself : yet here I stand,
Except one trouble that will quickly end,
The happiest of mankind.

O. Wilm. A rare example
Of fortune's caprice ; apter to surprize,
Or entertain, than comfort, or instruct.
If you would reason from events, be just,
And count, when you escap'd, how many perish'd ;
And draw your inf'rence thence.

Agn. Alas ! who knows,
But we were rendered childless by some storm,
In which you, though preserv'd, might bear a part.

Y. Wilm. How has my curiosity betray'd me
Into superfluous pain ! I faint with fondness ;
And shall, if I stay longer, rush upon them,
Proclaim myself their son, kiss and embrace them
Till their souls, transported with the excess
Of pleasure and surprize, quit their frail mansions,
And leave them breathless in my longing arms.

By circumstances then, and slow degrees,
 They must be let into a happiness
 Too great for them to bear at once, and live :
 That Charlot will perform : I need not feign
 To ask an hour for rest. [*Aside.*] Sir, I intreat
 The favour to retire where, for a while,
 I may repose myself. You will excuse
 This freedom, and the trouble that I give you :
 'Tis long since I have slept, and nature calls.

O. Wilm. I pray no more : believe we're only troubled,
 That you should think any excuse were needful.

Y. Wilm. The weight of this is some incumbrance
 to me ;

[*Takes a casket out of his bosom, and gives it to his mother.*
 And its contents of value : if you please
 To take the charge of it 'till I awake,
 I shall not rest the worse. If I should sleep
 'Till I'm ask'd for, as perhaps I may,
 I beg that you would wake me.

Agu. Doubt it not :
 Distracted as I am with various woes,
 I shall remember that.

[*Exit.*

Y. Wilm. Merciless grief !
 What ravage has it made ! how has it chang'd
 Her lovely form and mind ! I feel her anguish,
 And dread I know not what from her despair.
 My father too——O grant them patience, Heaven !
 A little longer, a few short hours more,
 And all their cares, and mine, shall end for ever.

How near is misery and joy ally'd !
Nor eye, nor thought can their extremes divide :
A moment's space is long, and light'ning slow
To fate descending to reverse our woe,
Or blast our hopes, and all our joys o'erthrow.

[*Exeunt*,

ACT III. SCENE I.

The Scene continued. AGNES enters alone, with the Casket in her hand.

Who should this stranger be ? And then this casket—
He says it is of value, and yet trusts it,
As if a trifle, to a stranger's hand—
His confidence amazes me—Perhaps
It is not what he says—I'm strongly tempted
To open it, and see—No, let it rest.
Why should my curiosity excite me,
To search and pry into th' affairs of others ;
Who have t' employ my thoughts, so many cares
And sorrows of my own ?—With how much ease
The spring gives way ?—Surprizing ! most prodigious !
My eyes are dazzled, and my ravish'd heart
Leaps at the glorious sight—How bright's the lustre,
How immense the worth of these fair jewels ?
Ay, such a treasure would expel for ever
Base poverty, and all its abject train ;
The mean devices we're reduc'd to use
To keep out famine, and preserve our lives

From day to day ; the cold neglect of friends ;
 The galling scorn, or more provoking pity
 Of an insulting world—Possess'd of these,
 Plenty, content, and power might take their turn,
 And lofty pride bare its aspiring head
 At our approach, and once more bend before us.
 —A pleasing dream ! 'Tis past ; and now I wake
 More wretched by the happiness I've lost.
 For sure it was a happiness to think,
 Though but a moment, such a treasure mine.
 Nay, it was more than thought—I saw and touch'd
 The bright temptation, and I see it yet—
 'Tis here—'tis mine—I have it in possession—
 —Must I resign it ? Must I give it back ?
 Am I in love with misery and want ?—
 To rob myself, and court so vast a loss ?—
 —Retain it then—But how ?—There is a way—
 Why sinks my heart ? Why does my blood run cold ?
 Why am I thrill'd with horror ?—'Tis not choice,
 But dire necessity suggests the thought.

Old WILMOT enters.

O. Wilm. The mind contented, with how little pains
 The wand'ring senses yield to soft repose,
 And die to gain new life ? He's fallen asleep
 Already—Happy man !—What dost thou think,
 My Agnes, of our unexpected guest ?
 He seems to me a youth of great humanity :
 Just e'er he clos'd his eyes, that swam in tears,
 He wrung my hand, and press'd it to his lips ;

And with a look, that pierc'd me to the soul,
Begg'd me to comfort thee: and—dost thou hear me?—
What art thou gazing on?—Fie, 'tis not well—
This casket was deliver'd to you closed:
Why have you open'd it? Should this be known,
How mean must we appear?

Agn. And who shall know it?

O. Wilm. There is a kind of pride, a decent dignity
Due to ourselves; which, spite of our misfortunes,
May be maintain'd, and cherish'd to the last.
To live without reproach, and without leave
To quit the world, shews sovereign contempt,
And noble scorn of its relentless malice.

Agn. Shews sovereign madness, and a scorn of sense.
Pursue no farther this detested theme:
I will not die, I will not leave the world
For all that you can urge, until compell'd.

O. Wilm. To chase a shadow, when the setting sun
Is darting his last rays, were just as wise,
As your anxiety for fleeting life,
Now the last means for its support are failing:
Were famine not as mortal as the sword,
This warmth might be excused—But take thy choice;
Die how you will, you shall not die alone.

Agn. Nor live, I hope,

O. Wilm. There is no fear of that,

Agn. Then, we'll live both.

O. Wilm. Strange folly! where's the means?

Agn. The means are there; those jewels—

O. Wilm. Ha!—Take heed;

Perhaps thou dost but try me ; yet take heed—
There's nought so monstrous but the mind of man
In some conditions may be brought t'approve ;
Theft, sacrilege, treason, and parricide,
When flatt'ring opportunity enticed,
And desperation drove, have been committed
By those who once would start to hear them named.

Agn. And add to these detested suicide,
Which, by a crime much less, we may avoid.

O. Wilm. Th' inhospitable murder of our guest !—
How couldst thou form a thought so very tempting,
So advantageous, so secure, and easy ;
And yet so cruel, and so full of horror ?

Agn. 'Tis less impiety, less against nature,
To take another's life, than end our own.

O. Wilm. It is no matter, whether this or that
Be, in itself, the less or greater crime :
Howe'er we may deceive ourselves or others,
We act from inclination, not by rule,
Or none could act amiss—And that all err,
None but the conscious hypocrite denies.

—O ! what is man, his excellence and strength,
When in an hour of trial and desertion,
Reason, his noblest power, may be suborned
To plead the cause of vile assassination.

Agn. You're too severe : reason may justly plead
For her own preservation.

O. Wilm. Rest contented :
Whate'er resistance I may seem to make,
I am betray'd within : my will's seduced,

And my whole soul infected. The desire
Of life returns, and brings with it a train
Of appetites, that rage to be supplied.
Whoever stands to parley with temptation,
Does it to be o'ercome.

Agn. Then nought remains,
But the swift execution of a deed
That is not to be thought on, or delay'd.
We must dispatch him sleeping: Should he wake,
'Twere madness to attempt it.

O. Wilm. True, his strength
Single is more, much more than ours united;
So may his life, perhaps, as far exceed
Ours in duration, should he 'scape this snare.
Gen'rous, unhappy man! O! what could move thee
To put thy life and fortune in the hands
Of wretches mad with anguish!

Agn. By what means?
By stabbing, suffocation, or by strangling
Shall we effect his death?

O. Wilm. Why, what a fiend! —
How cruel, how remorseless and impatient
Have pride, and poverty made thee?

Agn. Barbarous man!
Whose wasteful riots ruin'd our estate,
And drove our son, ere the first down had spread
His rosy cheeks, spite of my sad presages,
Earnest intreaties, agonies and tears,
To seek his bread 'mongst strangers, and to perish
In some remote, inhospitable land——

The loveliest youth, in person and in mind,
That ever crown'd a groaning mother's pains!
Where was thy pity, where thy patience then?
Thou cruel husband! thou unnat'ral father!
Thou most remorseless, most ungrateful man,
To waste my fortune, rob me of my son;
To drive me to despair, and then reproach me
For being what thou'st made me.

O. Wilm. Dry thy tears:

I ought not to reproach thee. I confess
That thou hast suffer'd much: So have we both.
But chide no more: I'm wrought up to thy purpose.
The poor, ill-fated, unsuspecting victim,
Ere he reclined him on the fatal couch,
From which he's ne'er to rise, took off the sash,
And costly dagger that thou saw'st him wear;
And thus, unthinking, furnish'd us with arms
Against himself. Which shall I use?

Agn. The sash.

If you make use of that, I can assist.

O. Wilm. No;

'Tis a dreadful office, and I'll spare
Thy trembling hands the guilt—steal to the door,
And bring me word; if he be still asleep.

[Exit Agnes.]

Or I'm deceiv'd, or he pronounc'd himself
The happiest of mankind. Deluded wretch!
Thy thoughts are perishing, thy youthful joys,
Touch'd by the icy hand of grisly death,
Are with'ring in their bloom——But thought ex-
tinguish'd,

He'll never know the loss, nor feel the bitter
 Pangs of disappointment—Then I was wrong
 In counting him a wretch: To die well pleas'd,
 Is all the happiest of mankind can hope for.
 To be a wretch, is to survive the loss
 Of every joy, and even hope itself,
 As I have done—Why do I mourn him then?
 For, by the anguish of my tortur'd soul,
 He's to be envy'd, if compar'd with me.

AGNES enters, with Young Wilmot's dagger.

Agn. The stranger
 Sleeps at present; but so restless
 His slumbers seem, they can't continue long.
 Come, come, dispatch—Here I've secur'd his dagger.
O. Wilm. O Agnes! Agnes! if there be a hell, 'tis
 just
 We should expect it.

[Goes to take the dagger, but lets it fall.]

Agn. Nay, for shame, shake off this panick, and be
 more yourself.

O. Wilm. What's to be done? On what had we de-
 termin'd?

Agn. You're quite dismay'd. I'll do
 The deed myself. *[Takes up the dagger.]*

O. Wilm. Give me the fatal steel.
 'Tis but a single murder,
 Necessity, impatience and despair,
 The three wide mouths, of that true Cerberus,
 Grim poverty, demands—They shall be stopp'd.

Ambition, persecution, and revenge
 Devour their millions daily : and shall I—
 But follow me, and see how little cause
 You had to think there was the least remains
 Of manhood, pity, mercy, or remorse,
 Left in this savage breast. *[Going the wrong way.]*

Agn. Where do you go?
 The street is that way.

O. Wilm. True! I had forgot.

Agn. Quite, quite confounded.

O. Wilm. Well, I recover.

—I shall find the way. *[Exit.]*

Agn. O softly! softly!
 The least noise undoes us.

—Still I fear him :

—No now he seems determined—O! that pause,
 That cowardly pause!—His resolution fails—

'Tis wisely done to lift your eyes to heaven;
 When did you pray before? I have no patience—
 How he surveys him? What a look was there?—
 How full of anguish, pity and remorse—

—He'll never do it—Strike, or give it o'er—

—No, he recovers—But that trembling arm
 May miss its aim; and if he fails, we're lost—

'Tis done—O! no; he lives, he struggles yet.

Y. Wilm. O! father! father! *[In another room.]*

Agn. Quick, repeat the blow.

What pow'r shall I invoke to aid thee, Wilmot!

—Yet hold thy hand—Inconstant, wretched
 woman!

What doth my heart recoil, and bleed with him
Whose murder you contrived—O Wilmot! Wilmot!

CHARLOT, MARIA, EUSTACE, RANDAL, and others,
enter.

Char. What strange neglect! The doors are all un-
barr'd,
And not a living creature to be seen.

Old WILMOT and AGNES enter.

Char. Sir, we are come to give and to receive
A thousand greetings—Ha! what can this mean?
Why do you look with such amazement on us?—
Are these your transports for your son's return?—
Where is my Wilmot? Has he not been here?—
Would he defer your happiness so long;
Or could a habit so disguise your son,
That you refus'd to own him?

Agnes. Heard you that?
What prodigy of horror is disclosing,
To render murder venial.

O. Wilm. Pr'ythee, peace:
The miserable damn'd suspend their howling,
And the swift orbs are fix'd in deep attention.

Y. Wilm. [*Groans*] Oh! oh! oh!

Eust. Sure that deep groan came from the inner
room.

Randal. It did; and seem'd the voice of one expiring,
Merciful heaven! where will these terrors end?

That is the dagger my young master wore ;
And see, his father's hands are stain'd with blood.

[*Young Wilmot groans again.*]

Eust. Another groan ! Why do we stand to gaze
On these dumb phantoms of despair and horror ?
Let us search farther : Randal, shew the way.

Char. This is the third time those fantastick forms
Have forc'd themselves upon my mental eyes,
And sleeping gave me more than waking pains.
O you eternal pow'rs ! if all your mercy
To wretched mortals be not quite extinguish'd,
And terrors only guard your awful thrones,
Remove this dreadful vision—Let me wake,
Or sleep the sleep of death.

[*Exeunt Charlot, Maria, Eustace, Randal, &c.*]

O. Wilm. Sleep those who may ;
I know my lot is endless perturbation.

Agn. Let life forsake the earth, and light the sun,
And death and darkness bury in oblivion
Mankind and all their deeds, that no posterity
May ever rise to hear our horrid tale,
Or view the grave of such detested parricides.

O. Wilm. Curses and deprecations are in vain :
The sun will shine, and all things have their course.
When we, the curse and burthen of the earth,
Shall be absorb'd, and mingled with its dust.
Our guilt and desolation must be told,
From age to age, to teach desponding mortals,
How far beyond the reach of human thought

Heaven, when incens'd, can punish—Die thou first.

[*Stabs Agnes.*

I dare not trust thy weakness.

Agn. Ever kind,

But most in this.

O. Wilm. I will not long survive thee.

Agn. Do not accuse thy erring mother, Wilmot!
With too much rigour when ~~we~~ meet above.
Rivers of tears, and ages spent in howling
Could ne'er express the anguish of my heart.
To give thee life for life, and blood for blood,
Is not enough. Had I ten thousand lives,
I'd give them all to speak my penitence
Deep, and sincere, and equal to my crime. [*Dis.*

CHARLOT led by MARIA and RANDAL; EUSTACE,
and the rest, enter.

Char. Welcome, despair! I'll never hope again—
Why have you forc'd me from Wilmot's side?
Let me return—unhand me—let me die.
Patience, that, till this moment, ne'er forsook me,
Has took her flight; and my abandon'd mind,
Rebellious to a lot so void of mercy
And so unexpected, rages to madness.
—O thou! who know'st our frame, who know'st
these woes
Are more than human fortitude can bear,
O! take me, take me hence, e're I relapse;
And in distraction, with unhallow'd tongue,
Again arraign your mercy— [*Faints.*

Eust. Unhappy maid! This strange event my strength

Can scarce support ; no wonder thine should fail.

—How shall I vent my grief? O Wilmot! Wilmot!
Thou truest lover, and thou best of friends,
Are these the fruits of all thy anxious cares
For thy ungrateful parents?—Cruel fiends!
To use thee thus!—To recompense with death
Thy most unequall'd duty and affection!

O. Wilm. What whining fool art thou, who would'st
usurp

My sovereign right of grief?—Was he thy son?—
Say! canst thou shew thy hands reeking with blood,
That flow'd, thro' purer channels, from thy loins?

Eust. Forbid it, Heaven! that I should know such
guilt:

Yet his sad fate demands commiseration.

O. Wilm. Compute the sands that bound the spa-
cious ocean,

And swell their number with a single grain ;
Increase the noise of thunder with thy voice ;
Or when the raging wind lays nature waste,
Assist the tempest with thy feeble breath ;
Add water to the sea, and fire to *Ætna* ;
But name not thy faint sorrow with the anguish
Of a curst wretch who only hopes for this

[*Stabbing himself.*]

To change the scene, but not relieve his pain.

Rand. A dreadful instance of the last remorse!
May all your woes end here.

O. Wilm. O would they end
A thousand ages hence, I then should suffer
Much less than I deserve. Yet let me say,
You'll do but justice, to inform the world,
This horrid deed, that punishes itself,
Was not intended as he was our son ;
For that we knew not, 'till it was too late.
Proud and impatient under our afflictions,
While heaven was labouring to make us happy,
We brought this dreadful ruin on ourselves.
Mankind may learn—but—oh !—— [Dies.

Rand. The most will not :

Let us at least be wiser, nor complain
Of heaven's mysterious ways, and awful reign :
By our bold censures we invade his throne
Who made mankind, and governs but his own :
Tho' youthful Wilmot's sun be set ere noon,
The ripe in virtue never die too soon. [Exeunt.

THE END.

IR.

Dier.

unt.